

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Joseph Louis Young, III,	)	C/A No. 0:14-2550-JMC-PJG
	)	
Petitioner,	)	
	)	<b>REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION</b>
v.	)	
	)	
Warden Thomas,	)	
	)	
Respondent.	)	
_____	)	

The petitioner, Joseph Louis Young, III (“Petitioner”), a self-represented prisoner confined at Federal Correctional Institution (“FCI”) Edgefield, filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241. This matter is before the court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) and Local Civil Rule 73.02(B)(2)(c) DSC. Having reviewed the petition in accordance with applicable law, the court concludes that it should be summarily dismissed.

**I. Factual and Procedural Background**

Petitioner alleges a conviction in this court for drug and firearm offenses on December 30, 2008, resulting in a sentence of 262 months’ imprisonment. (ECF No. 1 at 2.) The docket in Petitioner’s criminal case reflects that he was originally sentenced on December 14, 2007; however, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit remanded the case for resentencing on direct appeal. See United States v. Young, C/A No. 6:07-113-GRA (D.S.C. Feb. 13, 2007).<sup>1</sup> Petitioner was resentenced on December 30, 2008 and the Fourth Circuit affirmed the conviction and sentence by order issued on January 14, 2010. Id. at ECF Nos. 56, 80. Petitioner filed a motion to

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<sup>1</sup> A court may take judicial notice of its own records. See Colonial Penn Ins. Co. v. Coil, 887 F.2d 1236, 1239 (4th Cir. 1989).

vacate under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 on June 17, 2010, which the court denied on October 14, 2010. Id. at ECF Nos. 83, 96.

In the instant action, Petitioner alleges that he “is actually innocent of being a Career Offender.” (ECF No. 1 at 3.) Citing Descamps v. United States, 133 S. Ct. 2276 (2013), Petitioner claims that a former conviction for pointing and presenting a firearm no longer qualifies as predicate offense under the Armed Career Criminal Act (“ACCA”).<sup>2</sup> (Id.)

## II. Discussion

### A. Standard of Review

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of the *pro se* petition filed in this case pursuant to the Rules Governing § 2254 Cases,<sup>3</sup> 28 U.S.C. § 2254; the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (“AEDPA”), Pub. L. No. 104-132, 110 Stat. 1214; and in light of the following precedents: Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 324–25 (1989); Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); Nasim v. Warden, Md. House of Corr., 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995) (en banc); Todd v. Baskerville, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983).

This court is required to liberally construe *pro se* petitions. Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89 (2007). *Pro se* petitions are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, id.; Gordon v. Leeke, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978), and a federal district court is charged with

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<sup>2</sup> Section 924(e) of Title 18 of the United States Code imposes a mandatory minimum fifteen-year sentence on felons who unlawfully possess, among other things, firearms, and who also have three or more previous convictions for committing certain drug crimes or violent felonies. 18 U.S.C. § 924(e)(1).

<sup>3</sup> The Rules Governing Section 2254 are applicable to habeas actions brought under § 2241. See Rule 1(b).

liberally construing a petition filed by a *pro se* litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. Hughes v. Rowe, 449 U.S. 5, 9 (1980); Cruz v. Beto, 405 U.S. 319 (1972). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* petition the petitioner's allegations are assumed to be true. Erickson, 551 U.S. at 93 (citing Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-56 (2007)).

However, the requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. Weller v. Dep't of Soc. Servs., 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990). The mandated liberal construction afforded to *pro se* pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the petitioner could prevail, it should do so; however, a district court may not rewrite a petition to include claims that were never presented, Barnett v. Hargett, 174 F.3d 1128 (10th Cir. 1999), construct the petitioner's legal arguments for him, Small v. Endicott, 998 F.2d 411 (7th Cir. 1993), or "conjure up questions never squarely presented" to the court, Beaudett v. City of Hampton, 775 F.2d 1274, 1278 (4th Cir. 1985).

## **B. Analysis**

The instant petition, filed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241, is subject to summary dismissal because "it is well established that defendants convicted in federal court are obliged to seek habeas relief from their convictions and sentences through § 2255." Rice v. Rivera, 617 F.3d 802, 807 (4th Cir. 2010) (citing In re Vial, 115 F.3d 1192, 1194 (4th Cir. 1997)). Petitioner cannot challenge his federal conviction and sentence under § 2241 unless he can satisfy the § 2255 savings clause, which states:

An application for a writ of habeas corpus in behalf of a prisoner who is authorized to apply for relief by motion pursuant to this section, shall not be entertained if it appears that the applicant has failed to apply for relief, by motion, to

the court which sentenced him, or that such court has denied him relief, unless it also appears that the remedy by motion is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of his detention.

28 U.S.C. § 2255(e); see also Reyes-Requena v. United States, 243 F.3d 893, 901 (5th Cir. 2001); Ennis v. Olsen, No. 00-7361, 2000 WL 1868982, at \*1 (4th Cir. Dec. 22, 2000). In this case, Petitioner has been unsuccessful in seeking relief under § 2255. However, “the remedy afforded by § 2255 is not rendered inadequate or ineffective merely because an individual has been unable to obtain relief under that provision, or because an individual is procedurally barred from filing a § 2255 motion.” See In re Vial, 115 F.3d at 1194 n.5 (citations omitted).

Additionally, Petitioner fails to satisfy criteria set forth by the Fourth Circuit to determine whether a § 2255 motion would be inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of a prisoner’s detention. In In re Jones, 226 F.3d 328 (4th Cir. 2000), the court held that a petitioner must show:

(1) at the time of conviction, settled law of this circuit or the Supreme Court established the legality of the conviction; (2) subsequent to the prisoner’s direct appeal and first § 2255 motion, the substantive law changed such that the conduct of which the prisoner was convicted is deemed not to be criminal; and (3) the prisoner cannot satisfy the gatekeeping provisions of § 2255 because the new rule is not one of constitutional law.

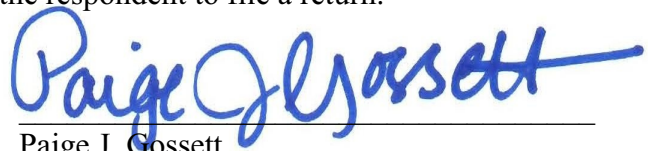
In re Jones, 226 F.3d at 333-34. The instant Petition fails to demonstrate that the conduct for which Petitioner was convicted has been deemed non-criminal by any substantive law change since his direct appeal. Instead, Petitioner alleges that he is “actually innocent” of his sentence enhancement pursuant to the ACCA and argues that a former weapon offense “no longer qualifies as a Career Offender predicate” in light of Descamps. (ECF No. 1 at 3.) However, Descamps has not been declared retroactive on collateral review by the Supreme Court. See Baker v. Zych, C/A No. 7:13-cv-512, 2014 WL 1875114, at \*2 (W.D. Va. May 9, 2014) (collecting cases which hold that

Descamps is not retroactive on collateral review); Williams v. Ziegler, C/A No. 5:12-cv-398, 2014 WL 201713, at \*2 n.3 (S.D.W. Va. Jan. 17, 2014). Therefore, Petitioner's reliance on Descamps is misplaced.<sup>4</sup>

Further, the Fourth Circuit has not extended the reach of the savings clause to petitioners who challenge only their sentences. See United States v. Poole, 531 F.3d 263, 267 n.7 (4th Cir. 2008); see also Whiteside v. United States, 748 F.3d 541, 547 n.4 (4th Cir. 2014) (noting that the Eleventh Circuit recently permitted a federal inmate to challenge the legality of a sentence under § 2241, but “expressly” refusing to decide whether the savings clause might justify relief from a sentencing error through a § 2241 petition in this Circuit); Darden v. Stephens, No. 10-7496, 2011 WL 1625094, at \*1-2 (4th Cir. Apr. 29, 2011). As Petitioner has not shown that a motion filed pursuant to § 2255 is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of his conviction or sentence, this matter should be dismissed.

### III. Conclusion

Accordingly, the court recommends that the Petition in the above-captioned case be dismissed without prejudice and without requiring the respondent to file a return.



Paige J. Gossett  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

July 31, 2014  
Columbia, South Carolina

*The parties' attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.*

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<sup>4</sup> The Petition also cites to United States v. Hemingway, 734 F.3d 323 (4th Cir. 2013) (addressing whether the South Carolina common law crime of assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature qualified as a violent felony). (ECF No. 1 at 3.) However, it is unclear why Petitioner believes the holding in Hemingway justifies relief in this case.

### **Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation**

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. “[I]n the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must ‘only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.’” Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co., 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005) (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 72 advisory committee’s note).

Specific written objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); see Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), (d). Filing by mail pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Robin L. Blume, Clerk  
United States District Court  
901 Richland Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

**Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation.** 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); Wright v. Collins, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); United States v. Schronce, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).